CHAPTER III

iHE leisure hours of camp life during the winter and spring of 1864 had permitted me to plod through several volumes of Herhert Spencer, and to carry on a somewhat active correspondence with friends in Washington and various parts of the Northern States. The political intelligence brought by letters and newspapers was by no means cheering. To the army mind—that is, to those in the field looking at political happenings from afar, and having nothing in view but to bring the struggle against the rebellion and for the restoration of the Union under the new conditions to a successful issue—the requirements of the situation appeared to be simple and clear. The one thing needed first of all seemed to be that the administration be supported in its efforts to rally the whole force of the Union sentiment of the country against the common enemy. No doubt, there might be differences of opinion as to how this should be done in detail. No doubt, some things had been done by, or under, the auspices of the administration that were open to criticism. No doubt, our government had not been as successful in the field as it should have been. No doubt, there were different theories as to the actual status of the rebel States in or out of the Union, and as to the methods of accomplishing their reconstruction when the rebellion should have been overcome. But in point of fact, the rebellion was not yet overcome, and it was questionable whether it would ever be

overcome if the Union forces acted at cross purposes in directing their efforts. And if the rebellion was not overcome, all these disputes wo\4d appear to have been vain aii<i idle; But the criticism of